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Corzine warns of difficult road ahead in Iraq

By JOSH BERNSTEIN

Burlington County Times

WILLINGBORO — The war to topple Saddam Hussein has been a success, but the United States still faces a long, difficult road when rebuilding Iraq, U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine said yesterday.



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"Militarily, it's gone exceptionally well. I think it has met the expectations that were laid out by the military. The military might people did expect prevailed," said Corzine, a former sergeant in the Marine Corps Reserves. "I think we've got a very difficult task ahead of us in restoring civil law and order and behavior in Iraq, but most importantly, to try to transition to a long-term government that relies on democracy."

Corzine was at the Kennedy Center on JFK Way yesterday to present township officials with \$360,000 for the renovation of the Willingboro Patenaude Senior Citizen Center. He recalled township resident Staff Sgt. Terry Hemingway, 39, killed in an apparent suicide attack in Iraq last Thursday.

"We have changing times we are experiencing in America. I know that you had a tragedy here in Willingboro, losing one of your own in Iraq," Corzine said. "Every day it seems our spirits go up and down. We must all hang together, and be proud of what our men and women do to protect America."

In an interview following the event, the Democratic first-term senator said the United States could be in Iraq for decades, and the effort could cost hundreds of millions of dollars. He said those planning for post-war Iraq must do an effective job establishing a new government and not "instability down the road" that could threaten American lives.

"If we don't do a better job than we did in Afghanistan, I think you're going to see frustration among the American people and people saying the United States' motives weren't pure," he said.

Corzine said the Bush administration has a lot of diplomatic fence mending ahead. Although he feels the United States had the legal right to invade Iraq, the pre-emptive military action caused dissension among our

allies in the United Nations, including Canada, Mexico, Germany, France and Russia.

"There's a lot of frayed nerves and frayed security among the people we want to be our allies," Corzine said. "I think we need to re-establish the credibility of the United Nations. I think we have to re-establish the United Nations as a more effective (organization) for providing collective security. We have to do the same thing with NATO.

"We, as the most important power on the face of the Earth, need to show our leadership in trying to bring the world together."

Corzine said we may never know the fate of Saddam. However, he said he does believe the chemical and biological weapons the Bush administration claims Iraq possessed would be found in the country.

"It's pretty clear they had chemical and biological weapons until the inspectors left in 1998. Given the nature of the regime, I can't imagine they would just destroy it," he said. "We have a tremendous amount of international credibility on the line to make sure it is found. This is going to be a closely monitored process."

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